



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

FY 2006 Alpena FRO Accomplishment Summary

Leadership in Science and Technology

Science and technology form the foundation of successful fish and aquatic resource conservation and are used to structure and implement monitoring and evaluation programs that are critical to determine the success of management actions. The Service is committed to following established principles of sound science. The Alpena Fishery Resources Office in Alpena, Michigan provides a leadership role in many areas of conservation. The following accomplishments are a list of examples of leadership that the office provided in science and technology during Fiscal Year 2006 (October 2005-September 2006).

Lake Whitefish Age Determination

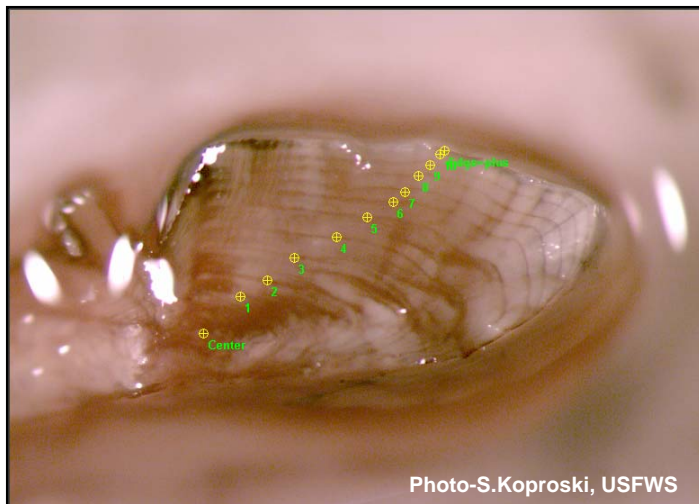


Photo-S.Koproski, USFWS

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

During the month of October 2005, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski began aging lake whitefish otoliths collected during the Lake Huron Lake Whitefish Distribution Study in 2004. This study is funded through the USFWS Restoration Act, and there are 7 agencies (USFWS, Michigan DNR, OMNR, CORA, Chippewas of Nawash First Nation, Saugeen First Nation, Bruce Power) tagging approximately 15,000 lake whitefish lakewide in each

of 3 years to better delineate lake whitefish spawning stocks in Lake Huron.

Biologist Koproski began aging otoliths from lethal samples collected from the 2004 tagging activities using the “crack and burn” technique to identify annuli present within the otoliths. Two distinct growth patterns are identified using “crack and burn” analysis: broad summer growth and narrow winter growth. By counting the bands of winter growth, age estimates are obtained from the otoliths. Biologist Koproski analyzed approximately 125 otolith samples collected in 2004. This represents approximately 1/3 of the lethal samples collected for this study.

This work is an example of the Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", and "Cooperation with Native American Tribes".

2005 Lake Huron Lake Whitefish Distribution Study Data Compiled



*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

In April 2006, Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt compiled lake whitefish tagging data from Service and partner agencies in a shared database as part of a Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act funded Lake Huron lake whitefish distribution study. The goals of this study are to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of 8 selected lake whitefish stocks in Lake Huron and to determine the contribution of each stock to commercial fishery yields. The 8

stocks selected for this study are Detour, Alpena (Middle Island & Thunder Bay), Saginaw Bay, Burnt Island, South Bay mouth, the Fishing Islands, Douglas Point, and Sarnia. Partner agencies for this study include the Service, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Bruce Power, Chippewas of Nawash, Saugeen First Nation, and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

In the fall of 2005, over 8,500 lake whitefish were tagged by the 7 partner agencies across all sampling sites. From 2003 through 2005, over 24,000 lake whitefish have been tagged and released. Data was entered by each agency into a standard database designed by Woldt and sent to the Alpena FRO for inclusion in a central study database. Woldt provided each agency with data collection protocols and database formats prior to the study's start. Woldt has been working with agency data representatives to ensure data accuracy and timely entry. To date, data has been entered and proofed from 6 agencies. Once all data has been entered, Woldt will distribute copies of the central database to all partners. The full database is needed to accurately process tag returns and issue rewards. Each tag carries a \$5 US reward.

Serving as database manager for this study aids efforts to determine the spatial distribution and movement patterns of lake whitefish stocks and to determine the contribution of each stock to the commercial fishery. This will allow for better harvest management and protection of lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Leadership in Science and Technology" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Lake Sturgeon Surgery Demonstration



Photo-J.Boase, USFWS

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

On May 5, 2006, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski and James Boase traveled to Sarnia, Ontario to take part in a surgery demonstration workshop for implanting sonic tags in lake sturgeon. Biologist Koproski obtained funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to capture, tag and track lake sturgeon in the St. Marys River. Partners on this project are Lake Superior State University (LSSU), Bay Mills Indian Community, and Soo Areas

Sportsman. Ashley Moerke, LSSU limnology professor, Roger Greil, LSSU Aquatics Research Laboratory Manager, Meghan Kline, LSSU student, Dr. Bruce Manny, U.S. Geological Survey, and Jim McFee and Christopher Vandergoot with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources all participated in the workshop as well. Meghan Kline will be hired by the Alpena FRO through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and she will be working primarily on the lake sturgeon project in the St. Marys River.

Lake sturgeon were captured and held by Purdy's Fishery (Purdy's) located in Sarnia, Ontario. Purdy's continues to be a valuable partner for providing live lake sturgeon and facilities to host similar events for resource professionals. Twelve (12) lake sturgeon captured from Lake Huron were made available for the demonstration at Purdy's. Fishery Biologist Boase demonstrated the incision location and suture knots to the group. Once Boase completed the procedure on the first fish it was measured, tagged and released. All participants of the workshop were allowed to practice on subsequent fish with Boase's close supervision. The techniques instructed and performed by participants were valuable to all present and will be used during the St. Marys River lake sturgeon telemetry project which will begin this month, and for other projects being conducted by partner agencies.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", "Cooperation with Native American Tribes", and "Leadership in Science and Technology".

Alpena FRO Staff Participate in Great Lakes VHS Conference Call

*Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist*

On June 29, 2006, Project Leader McClain, Biologists Boase and Bowen, and Student Trainee Ania participated in a conference call discussing status and concerns related to recent epizootics associated with Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) in the Great Lakes. Participants in this large conference call included representatives from each of the Great Lakes states, federal and provincial representatives from Canada, USDA-APHIS, NOAA, several university researchers and Service representatives from Regions 3, 5 and 9.

Several fish kills in lakes Ontario, Erie, St. Clair, and Huron have been confirmed to be associated with VHS and others are suspected. The fish kills involve a broad array of species and raise several management related concerns around the Great Lakes. Alpena FRO participation in the call was extremely important, particularly as it relates to the field work we are conducting in the Huron-Erie corridor (HEC) which has been an area particularly hard hit by these fish kills. Information on virulence and modes of transmission will likely change station protocols for sharing gear and working in the HEC to prevent inadvertent spread of the virus. Participants in the call were added to a list of contacts who will receive routine updates as new information becomes available.

Interagency cooperation and collaboration on issues or concerns of common interest are an important element in management of the Great Lakes fisheries. The fish disease concerns discussed on this call will benefit Service and partner operations in the Great Lakes and is critical for a coordinated approach to addressing a potentially serious emerging issue. Service participation in this call is consistent with and supportive of the "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Leadership in Science and Technology" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

The **Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO)** is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region. For more information about Alpena FRO programs and activities visit our web site located at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/>.

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